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GIUSEPPE MAZZINI
AND THE
GLOBALISATION
OF DEMOCRATIC
NATIONALISM
1830–1920

The Moses of Italian Unity: Mazzini and Nationalism as Political Religion

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Un princepe—et des conséquences—voilà tout.

Giuseppe Mazzini (1832)¹

THE 'MOSES' OF ITALIAN UNITY: thus Francesco De Sanctis famously dubbed Giuseppe Mazzini in his well known and influential lectures on the 'scuola democratica' of 1874, less than two years after the patriot's death. De Sanctis was referring to the fact that Mazzini had conducted Italy towards unification, or at least inspired that process, but had died—as the biblical prophet—just when the country entered the Promised Land of independence and political unity.² In his definition, the influential historian of literature could also rely on the very relevant presence of biblical imagery in the political thought and imagination of the Risorgimento: a presence which appears today to have been a more general characteristic of nineteenth-century European nationalisms.³ De Sanctis was, however, firstly alluding to the

¹ 'A principle—and its consequences—that is all', Giuseppe Mazzini, 'D'alcune cause che impediscono finora lo sviluppo della libertà in Italia', *La Giovine Italia*, June 1832, *Scritti editi ed inediti*, 100 vols (Imola, Tipografia Galeati, 1906–43) (hereafter *SEI*), vol. 2, p. 147. This is actually an epigraph to Mazzini's article, which he refers to as being quoted from the *Convention Nationale*. Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Italian and French are my own.

² 'Lo stesso avvenne al grande precursore della Bibbia: intravide la terra promessa, ma non ci entrò lui, Mosè' (The same happened to the great precursor in the Bible: Moses saw the holy land from a distance, but did not enter it). See Francesco De Sanctis, *Mazzini e la scuola democratica* (1874), ed. Carlo Muscetta and Giorgio Candeloro (Turin, Einaudi, 1961), p. 70. For the necessary contextualisation, see, still, Sergio Landucci, *Cultura e ideologia in Francesco De Sanctis* (Milan, Feltrinelli, 1977). On the traces of De Sanctis's 'Mazzini as Moses', see also Adolfo Ornodo, 'La missione religiosa e politica di Mazzini' (1934), in Ornodo, *Difesa del Risorgimento* (Turin, Einaudi, 1955), pp. 80 and 85.

³ For the Italian Risorgimento, the topic has not been sufficiently explored yet. See, especially, the works by Francesca Sofia (who is working on a broader project about this): 'Ebrei e Risorgimento: appunti per una ricerca', in *La Bibbia, la coccarda e il tricolore: i valdesi fra due emancipazioni (1798–1848)*, ed. Giampaolo Romagnani (Turin, Claudiana, 2001), pp. 349–67; eadem, 'Le fonti bibliche nel primato italiano di Vincenzo Gioberti', in *Risorgimento italiano e*

central religious tone, language, and symbols which had characterised Mazzini's political thought since the foundation of Young Italy in 1832. These were the language, imagination, and thought of a religious leader and a political prophet.

Mazzini's Political Religion

In this essay I explore the thought of Mazzini by reading it as a political religion. I rely on Clifford Geertz's definition of religion as 'cultural system'⁴ and on Emilio Gentile's more recent discussion of political religions.⁵ This discussion belongs to a debate on the transformation of modern politics which started in the 1930s, but which actually dates back at least to Rousseau's 'religion civil' (as famously exposed in his *Contrat social* of 1762). My own interpretation differs from, and tries to broaden, Gentile's since I suggest that the formula 'political religion' can be usefully applied not only to the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century, but also—granted that we keep in mind the clear and very relevant historical differences—to certain movements and experiences in nineteenth-century European political

thought before 1848.⁶ These movements (which characterised, for example, French, Polish, as well as Italian nationalism), though belonging to the tradition of liberalism, were also partly rooted in the religious, literary, and political thought of the Restoration. As such, they contained elements of early Romantic (especially German), as well as counter-revolutionary thought (notably French). These elements were directly or indirectly inherited especially from French mediations: mostly from Saint-Simonianism, as well as from trends of Catholic liberalism as interpreted chiefly by Felicité de Lamennais.

In Gentile's definition (which he applies to totalitarianism), a political religion is a system of myths, symbols, and rituals that subordinate the significance and aim of individual and collective existence to a supreme entity.⁷ This entity was, in the context of nineteenth-century Europe, the Romantic nation.⁸ In my view this definition can be usefully applied to Mazzini's political project (without comparing it directly with the experience of totalitarianism), which represented and expressed these tendencies in paradigmatic ways. I acknowledge that Mazzini's thought, centred on the notion of *nationality* or *nazionalità*, nourished at the same time a tradition and stream of voluntaristic and universalistic conceptions of the nation⁹—the vitality and influence of this tradition persisted at least until the First World War and its aftermath (and beyond that, outside Europe),¹⁰ chiefly in the debate on and claims of the rights of nationalities. Therefore, I do place Mazzini in the context of European liberalism, although in a quite peculiar position. In this essay, however, I am interested in studying the irrationalist and even authoritarian elements of Mazzini's thought, and the ways in which

religioni politiche, ed. Simon Lewis Sullam, special issue of *Società e storia*, 17, 106 (2004), 747–62. One should not forget, also, Giorgio Spini, *Risorgimento e protestanti* (Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1989) and recent remarks on religious and biblical elements and narratives in Risorgimento literature in Alberto M. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: parentela, santità, onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin, Einaudi, 2000), pp. 119–39. For the European context, see Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986); Adam Zamoycki, *Holy Madness: Romantics, Puritans, and Revolutionaries, 1776–1871* (New York and London, Penguin, 1999); and, especially, Anthony Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2000); Mary Anne Perkins, *Nation and Word, 1770–1850: Religious and Metaphysical Language in European National Consciousness* (Aldershot, UK, and Brookfield, VT, Ashgate, 1997).

⁴ 'Religion is 1) a system of symbols which acts to 2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by 3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence'; see Clifford Geertz, 'Religion as Cultural System' (1963), in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, Basic Books, 1973), p. 90. One should also not forget Geertz's more recent critics, such as Talal Asad, *The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category*, in Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD, and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) pp. 27–54. For a general reassessment, see Sherry B. Ortner (ed.), *The Fate of 'Culture': Geertz and Beyond* (Berkeley, CA, and London, University of California Press, 1999).

⁵ See Emilio Gentile, *Le religioni della politica: fra democrazia e totalitarismi* (Rome and Bari, Laterza, 2001), and the English version, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2006), which also offers a detailed overview of the theories and debates on the category of 'political religion' in the course of the twentieth century.

⁶ In the Italian case, however, Gentile does identify some of the roots of the Fascist political religion in Mazzini's thought: see *idem*, *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Rome and Bari, Laterza, 1995), pp. 8–12, and the English version, *idem*, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, 1996).

⁷ See, for this definition, Gentile, *Le religioni della politica*, p. xii, which I have used and discussed in "'Fate della rivoluzione una religione": aspetti del nazionalismo mazziniano come religione politica (1831–1855)", in Lewis Sullam, *Risorgimento italiano e religioni politiche*, 705–30, and in "'Dio e il popolo": la rivoluzione religiosa di Giuseppe Mazzini", in Alberto M. Banti and Paul Ginsborg (eds), *Storia d'Italia. Annali 22. Il Risorgimento* (Turin, Einaudi, 2007), pp. 401–22. I repeatedly rely on these works of mine in the course of the present essay.

⁸ On some aspects of which, in a perspective which goes beyond the traditional partition between 'naturalistic' and 'voluntaristic' nations, see Alberto M. Banti, 'La nazione come comunità di discendenza: aspetti del paradigma romantico', *Parolechiave*, 25 (2001), 115–41.

⁹ This is the classic interpretation of Mazzini's definition of the nation and of the tradition it belonged to and inspired, as exposed for example in the works of Alessandro Levi and Federico Chabod (I quote both below). See, more recently, among others, Nadia Urbinari, "'A Common Law of Nations": Giuseppe Mazzini's Democratic Nationality", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 1, 2 (1996), 197–222.

¹⁰ For example in the case of Mazzini's influence on Indian nationalism.

they affected his definition of the nation and the general nature of his political preaching. In a sense, I am exploring the limitations or, better, the boundaries, of Mazzini's liberalism. This thought developed in the context of the general shift produced by the French Revolution, the Counter-Revolution and Romanticism in a time of growing secularisation.¹¹ a series of quite different though interrelated trends and phenomena, which contributed to the genesis of a new religion of the nation. This new religion can be considered the fruit of what Mona Ozouf has called—in her studies of the French Revolution—a 'transfert de sacralité'.¹² a process explored more broadly in Ernest Kantorowicz's pioneering interpretation of the origins of patriotism.¹³ This process was, to put it in a formula, a 'transfer of the sacred' from traditional religion and traditional divinity, to the new faith in and idol of the nation.¹⁴

In this essay I also claim that Mazzini's thought should be firstly read on the level of symbols and rituals—meaning that there was a ritual aspect in the thought itself: a kind of liturgical repetition and permanent oscillation of terms and concepts.¹⁵ Here, I follow George Mosse's suggestion that post-revolutionary political thought should be studied not so much in terms of theory, but rather in terms of 'political style', starting from the 'iconographical language' it uses.¹⁶ And I interpret 'political style' based on Ernest Gombrich's basic definition of 'style' as: 'any distinctive, and therefore recognisable, way in which an act is performed'.¹⁷ I thus put an emphasis not on

theory but on action, or rather, more specifically, on thought and (as we shall see) words as acts.¹⁸

More precisely, I discuss Mazzini's thought both on the level of political theory, that is looking at its *content*: in this case, Mazzini's definition of the nation and its genesis. And I will also look at the *form* of this thought: thus trying to grasp Mazzini's 'style' of thought and discourse, which I think was based chiefly on the symbolic and ritual function of certain keywords, catchwords, and slogans. Lynn Hunt, following Furet and Ozouf (as well as indirectly going back to Max Weber), has suggested the existence of a new 'charisma of the word', generated by the French Revolution.¹⁹ Here, indeed, I am also concerned with the *aura* produced by certain words in modern political thought.²⁰

Mazzini's Nation and Its Origins

The supreme ideal and symbol to which Mazzini's political thought and project were subordinated is that of the Italian nation. But what was the nature of this nation? How could we define it, based on the writings of the Genoese patriot? In the interpretation presented here, Mazzini's nation is a syncretic one, especially in terms of its genesis. I partly contradict, in fact, the traditional definition of the Mazzinian nation, as exposed for example by Federico Chabod,²¹ since I suggest that this nation was not simply a

¹¹ An original treatment of recent trends in the historiography of the long-debated question of 'secularisation' is Jonathan Sheehan, 'Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay', *American Historical Review*, 108, 4 (2003), 1061–80.

¹² See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire, 1789–1799* (Paris, Gallimard, 1976).

¹³ See Ernest Kantorowicz, "'Pro patria mori'" in Medieval Political Thought', *American Historical Review*, 56, 3 (1951), 472–92, now collected in idem, *Selected Studies* (New York, Augustin, 1965), pp. 308–25. Kantorowicz developed his analysis in his well known *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1957).

¹⁴ For an overview of, and contribution to, the studies of nationalism based on this kind of approach and interpretation, see Smith, *Chosen Peoples*. For a general reading of modern European politics in light of the category of 'political religions', see also Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War* (New York, HarperCollins, 2005).

¹⁵ Here, again, I am freely inspired by the work of Clifford Geertz on politics, religion, and secularisation, especially by his article 'Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example' (1957), in idem, *Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 142–69. I do not explore here the question of ritual practices in Mazzini's movement, which would deserve specific and different research and analysis.

¹⁶ See George L. Mosse, 'Political Style and Political Theory: Totalitarian Democracy Revisited' (1984), in idem, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism* (Hanover, NH, and London, University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1993), pp. 60–9.

¹⁷ See E. H. Gombrich, 'Style', in *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (New York, Macmillan Free Press, 1969), vol. 15, p. 352.

¹⁸ In a broader sense, I have in mind here the historiographical reflection on 'words as acts', developed chiefly—also on the traces of philosophical theories of language (in particular, John Austin's—by scholars such as Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock. See Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1: *Regarding Method* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002); J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1989).

¹⁹ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1984), pp. 19–51.

²⁰ I thus do not address here the question of Mazzini's personal charisma and of his use of charisma in the leadership of Giovine Italia and his subsequent movements. This issue would deserve attention in a broader treatment of Mazzini's nationalism as political religion (together, for example, with that of ritual practices in the movements themselves, as I mentioned above). My general understanding of Mazzini's use of charisma (as it is usually interpreted within religious and political movements and sects by sociology since Max Weber) is that it was exerted—both intentionally and unintentionally—for the submission and integration of the followers. This could also be considered one of the reasons why, beyond unconscious identification and grandiosity, Mazzini would present himself as Moses.

²¹ See the influential Federico Chabod, *L'idea di nazione* (1943) (Rome and Bari, Laterza, 1961). The context in which this text (actually a series of lectures) was first drafted—as the original date shows—and thus the implications of the interpretation presented therein, have been too often overlooked. Today, the partition between 'naturalistic' (German) and 'voluntaristic' (French) nation, as still presented for example by Roger Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France*

voluntaristic one going back to Rousseau's 'social contract' and 'general will',²² and to French revolutionary, constitutional, and republican thought. But that it was also a nation generated from above: thus not only based on popular sovereignty, as the French revolutionary 'nation'.

In Mazzini's definition of 'nationalité', famously exposed in an article published in the *Jeune Suisse* of September 1835, the patriot wrote: 'Une nationalité est une pensée commune—un principe commun—un but commun; tels en sont les éléments essentiels' (Nationality is a common thought—a common principle—a common aim; these are its essential elements). And he went on by writing:

La nationalité c'est la part que Dieu fait à un peuple dans le travail humanitaire. C'est sa mission, sa tâche à accomplir sur la terre, pour que la pensée de Dieu puisse se réaliser dans le monde: l'œuvre qui lui donne droit de cité dans l'humanité: le baptême qui lui confère un caractère et lui assigne son rang parmi les peuples ses frères.

(Nationality is the role assigned by God to a people within the humanitarian travail. It a people's mission, their task to accomplish on earth so that God's thought may be realised in the world. Nationality is the work that gives a people its right of citizenship within humanity. It is the baptism which gives character to a people and designates their rank among their brother peoples.)

Then he continued:

Quand Dieu met un peuple dans le monde, en lui disant: Sois Nation! Il ne lui dit pas: isole-toi, jouis de ta vie come l'avare de son trésor. . . . il lui dit: marche, la tête levée, parmi les frères que je t'ai donnés, libre et sans contrainte, comme il convient à celui qui porte en son sein ma parole.²³

and Germany (Cambridge, MA, and London, Harvard University Press, 1992), seems historically unsatisfactory, and the two models of nation appear to historians much more blurred, intertwined, and porous, especially when considering their evolution.

²² It is of interest to note here, in the context of the political-religious genealogy of Mazzini's nation I am proposing, that the same notion of 'general will' in Rousseau has been traced back to religious or, more precisely, theological origins: see Patrick Riley, *The General Will Before Rousseau: The Transformation of the Divine into the Civic* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1986).

²³ See Giuseppe Mazzini, 'Nationalité: quelques idées sur une constitution nationale', *La Jeune Suisse*, 19, 23, 30 September 1835, in *SEL*, vol. 6, pp. 125, 127, 133. This definition is influenced by that of Philippe Buchez, 'De la nationalité', *L'Européen*, 31 December 1831, pp. 67–8; 21 January 1832, pp. 113–14; 4 February 1832, pp. 145–8 (cited also by Salvo Mastellone, *Mazzini e la Giovine Italia! (1831–1834)* (Pisa, Domus Mazziniana, 1960), vol. 1, p. 321). On Buchez, see François-André Isambert, *Politique, religion et science de l'homme chez Philippe Buchez (1796–1865)* (Paris, Cujas, 1967), pp. 103–18 and 309–11 for the relationship with Mazzini.

(When God places a people in the world and says to them: Be a Nation! He does not say: isolate yourself; enjoy your life as a miser with his treasure. He says: March, your head raised, among the brothers I gave you, free, without constraints, as is fitting for the one that carries my word in his chest.)

This part of Mazzini's definition of 'nationalité' thus assigns a very relevant role to God, partly weakening—as I have suggested elsewhere²⁴—one of the most unsettling aspects of the French revolutionary nation. This aspect was the fact that, for the first time, the nation was thought as stemming from below: from popular sovereignty, from the people. The Mazzinian nation, on the contrary, was imagined as deriving *at the same time from below* (from the people), *as well as from above* (from God): as with the sovereign power of the Ancien Régime.

If we ask ourselves what were the ideological origins of Mazzini's God, we will soon find out that they were Saint-Simonian.²⁵ This was noticed already over a century ago by Gaetano Salvemini in his path-breaking study of Mazzini,²⁶ in which the Italian historian wrote that 'four fifths of Mazzini's ideas were of Saint-Simonian origin'.²⁷ But we should also recall that Salvemini went so far as to define Mazzini's nation as 'una teocrazia popolare' (a popular theocracy): a definition often forgotten in the ensuing historiography of Mazzini.

²⁴ See 'Fate della rivoluzione una religione'.

²⁵ On Saint-Simonianism, see, firstly, the *Doctrines de Saint-Simon. Exposition. Première année, 1829*, introduction and notes by C. Bouglé et Elie Halévy (Paris, Rivière, 1924). And refer to Sébastien Charlety, *Histoire du Saint-Simonisme (1825–1864)* (Paris, Hartmann, 1931); Georg Iggers, *The Cult of Authority: The Political Philosophy of the Saint-Simoniens* (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1970); Robert B. Carls, *The Proffered Crown: Saint-Simonism as the Doctrine of Hope* (Baltimore, MD, and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). See also Jean Vidale, 'Les techniques de la propagande saint-simonienne à la fin de 1831', *Archives de sociologie des religions*, 10 (July–December 1960), 3–20. For the influence of Saint-Simonianism on the Risorgimento, see Renato Treves, *La dottrina saintimoniana nel pensiero italiano del Risorgimento* (1921) (Turin, Giapichelli, 1973); Francesco Piooco, *Utopia e riforma religiosa nel Risorgimento: il saintimonismo nella cultura toscana* (Bari, Laterza, 1972); and, though devoted mainly to the case of Gioberti, Sofia, 'Le fonti bibliche nel primato italiano'.

²⁶ Before that De Sanctis had, more in general, famously defined Mazzini's divinity as a 'political God'. See his *Mazzini e la scuola democratica*, p. 46.

²⁷ See Gaetano Salvemini, *Mazzini* (1925) in Salvemini, *Scritti sul Risorgimento*, ed. Piero Pieri and Carlo Pischedda (Milan, Feltrinelli, 1973). The first edition of this work dates back to 1905. An English version is *Mazzini*, trans. M. Rawson (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1957). This interpretation was followed, among others, by Otto Vossler, *Il pensiero politico di Giuseppe Mazzini* (1927), ed. and trans. Carlo Francovich (Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1971), pp. 50–1, and by Alessandro Galante Garrone, 'Mazzini in Francia e gli inizi della "Giovine Italia"', in *Mazzini e il mazzinianesimo*, Atti del 46 Congresso di storia del Risorgimento (Genoa, 24–28 September 1972) (Rome, Istituto italiano per la storia del Risorgimento, 1974), pp. 231–2.

I will go further (here in the footsteps of Adolfo Omodeo's interpretation),²⁸ and note that through Saint-Simonianism and through the influence and mediation of the writings of Felicité de Lamennais—especially his *Paroles d'un croyant* of 1834 and later his *Le livre du peuple* of 1838 (but the work of the Polish poet, nationalist, and mystic Adam Mickiewicz should also be mentioned here)²⁹—Mazzini had in fact received the notion of a national mission of divine origin. This notion was central to Mazzini's definition of 'nationalité', and had its remote origins in Joseph de Maistre's *Considérations sur la France* of 1797 (indirectly transmitted to Mazzini through the doctrines of the Saint-Simonians and, perhaps especially, of Lamennais, also through his periodical *L'Avenir*).³⁰ In his *Considérations*, de Maistre had written: 'Chaque nation, comme chaque individu, a reçu une mission qu'elle doit remplir' (Every nation, as every individual, has been given a mission that it must accomplish),³¹ thus resuscitating the biblical notion of a divine mission attributed to the elect people. This was a widespread concept in nineteenth-century European nationalisms, intertwined with that of the sacrificial, but redemptive, Christ-nation.³² This was, thus, the new nation that lay at the centre of Mazzini's political religion, of his religion of the nation.

Words, Symbols, and Ritual Thought

Beyond theoretical definitions and statements, and keeping in mind that Mazzini was no coherent thinker, I now turn to the question of Mazzini's political style. This style was chiefly characterised by the repeated use of symbolic words (often, again, of Saint-Simonian origin, but floating more generally on the French political scene of the 1830s) such as: 'nazionalità', 'repubblica', 'doveri'; as well as 'credenza', 'missione', 'apostolato'; even 'associazione', 'associazione universale', 'umanità'; and, finally, 'religione'.

²⁸ See, especially, Adolfo Omodeo, 'Primato francese e iniziativa italiana' (1929), in idem, *Difesa del Risorgimento*, pp. 19–38, and also his *Un reazionario: il conte J. De Maistre* (Bari, Laterza, 1939), pp. 78–101.

²⁹ See François-Xavier Coquin and Michel Maslowski (eds), *Le verbe et l'histoire: Mickiewicz, la France et l'Europe* (Paris, Institut d'études slaves, 2002).

³⁰ See the 'Maistrin' reference to France as the 'peuple missionnaire' in H. [Harel du Tancrèl], 'Des bases naturelles d'une réorganisation politique de la France', *L'Avenir*, 3 January 1831, in 'L'Avenir', 1830–1831: *antologia degli articoli di Felicité-Robert Lamennais e degli altri collaboratori*, ed. Guido Verrucci (Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1967), pp. 214–15. See also F. [R.-F. Rohrbacher], 'Mission du peuple français, c'est à dire des catholiques de France', *L'Avenir*, 20 January 1831, *ibid.*, p. 282.

³¹ See Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France* (1797) (Lyon and Paris, Rusand, 1829), p. 10.

³² See Perkins, *Nation and Smith*, *Chosen Peoples*, *passim*.

In his letters, especially at the beginning of his political adventure, Mazzini explicitly emphasised the function of words in the captivation and mobilisation of the masses. For example, in the autumn of 1831, he wrote to a follower in Paris concerning the word 'libertà':

Or noi abbiamo bisogno delle masse: abbiamo bisogno di trovare una *parola*, che abbia potenza di crearci eserciti, d'uomini decisi a combattere lungamente, disperatamente: d'uomini, che trovino un utile morale a sotterrarsi sotto le rovine delle loro città: d'uomini, che si slancino dietro i nostri passi, convinti, che dove noi gli guidiamo, è il meglio per essi.—Or, se questa *parola* non è Libertà, quale sarà? L'Indipendenza soltanto?³³

(Now, we need the masses: we need to find a *word* that may have the power to make armies of men decide to fight for a long time, desperately. Men that will be willing to bury themselves under the ruins of their own cities. Men who will follow us, believing that we will guide them to the best place for them.—Now, if this *word*, is not Freedom, what should it be? Independence only?)

The next year, in an article appearing in *La Giovine Italia*, Mazzini said for instance of the word 'repubblica':

E v'è una *parola* che il popolo intende dovunque, e più in Italia che altrove, una *parola* che suona alle moltitudini una definizione de' loro diritti, una scienza politica intera in compendio, un programma di libere istituzioni. Il popolo ha fede in essa, perchè egli in *quella parola* intravede un pegno di miglioramento, e d'influenza,—perchè il *suono stesso della parola* parla di lui, perchè egli rammenta confusamente che s'ebbe mai potenza e prosperità, le dovette a *quella parola scritta sulla bandiera* che lo guidava. I secoli han potuto rapirgli la coscienza delle sue forze, il sentimento de' suoi diritti, tutto; non *l'affetto a quella parola*, unica forse che possa trarlo dal fango d'inerzia ov'ei giace per sollevarlo a prodigi d'azione.

Quella parola è—REPUBBLICA.³⁴

(There is a *word* that the people understand everywhere, and in Italy more than anywhere else. A *word* which sounds to the multitudes like a definition of their own rights, a synthesis of the entire political science, a programme of free

³³ See Mazzini to Ippolito Benelli, Parigi, [Marsaille], 8 October [1831], *SEL*, vol. 5, p. 55. And, in the same letter: 'Cacciate in mezzo alle tulle quel vecchio *nome*—vecchio quanto il mondo, di sovranità nazionale, di rivoluzione popolare, di *repubblica*: ridestate tutte le memorie, che i Bolognesi, i Toscani, i Genovesi annettono a quel *nome*—e vedrete' (Spread among the crowds that old *name*—as old as the world—of national sovereignty, of popular revolution, of *republic*. Revive all the memories that the people of Bologna, Tuscany, and Genoa attach to that *name*—and you will then see [the results]) (emphasis added in both quotes).

³⁴ See 'D'alcune cause che impedirono finora lo sviluppo della libertà in Italia', *La Giovine Italia*, June and November 1832, *SEL*, vol. 2, pp. 147–221 (emphasis added). On the limits of Mazzini's republicanism, see below.

institutions. The people believe in it, because in *that word* it sees a sign of amelioration, of influence. The *same sound of that word* speaks about the people itself, since it remembers in a confused way that, if the people ever had power and prosperity, that was due to that *word written on the flag* that guided it. The past centuries may have deprived the people of the awareness of its powers, of the feeling of its rights, of everything. But they have not taken away the *affection for that word*, the only one that can make the people rise to prodigious actions.

That word is: REPUBLIC.)

Elsewhere in his correspondence, Mazzini explicitly mentioned the model of the Saint-Simonians, referring precisely to the insistence of the *Église de Saint-Simon* on fixed formulas.³⁵ And, in his well known *Foi et avenir* of 1834, he emphasised the 'plain enunciation' and 'proclamation' of 'isolated beliefs',³⁶ as a way—apprehended especially from the Saint-Simonians, but belonging to a tradition which came down from the French revolutionary triad: *liberté, fraternité, égalité* and its repeated use in speech and print—of capturing consensus over the patriotic project of political and religious renovation.

Mazzini's thought often appears to be based on couplets which constitute the basis of a ritual language founded on symbols. One thinks chiefly of his most famous formula: 'Dio e il popolo' (God and the people). These words (beyond reminding us once more, on the level of content, of the centrality of the divinity in Mazzini's thought) suggest a permanent oscillation between two symbols, mutually attracting and mutually rejecting each other, and were intended to generate an irrational attraction and attachment to the political message they conveyed. However, the same terms expressed a central tension in Mazzini's thought: an inner and permanent dialectic between authority (God) and freedom (the people).³⁷ Another of Mazzini's famous formulas, 'Pensiero e azione' (Thought and action), expresses furthermore the constant symbolic and ritual oscillation in Mazzini's thought between political ideals and political acts: a relation-

ship which was typical of Romantic sensitivity³⁸ and of nineteenth-century idealistic conceptions.³⁹

One may consider how these formulas could be perceived by Mazzini's contemporaries, through the testimony of some of his followers (who would actually later become his critics, in the general early decline of Mazzini's unquestioned influence after 1848). Carlo Pisacane, for example, wrote in the early 1850s:

Dio e il popolo, dice il Mazzini, significa: *la legge, ed il popolo* interprete della legge, quindi ne inferisce primieramente che il popolo non è legislatore. Intanto, cotesta legge è ignota... Chi la rivelerà? *I migliori per senso e per virtù*, risponde Mazzini. Quindi ad essi bisogna concedere la tutela delle nostre anime. Da qualunque punto, da qualunque principio delle dottrine in questione prendiamo le mosse, siamo inesorabilmente condotti al puro dispotismo, scoglio inevitabile per chiunque voglia riconoscere un vero ed un giusto assolutismo che imponga doveri.⁴⁰

(*God and the people*, Mazzini says. He means: *the Law and the people* as the interpreter of the law. One may thus infer that the people are not the legislator. Also, this law is unknown... Who will reveal it? *The best by mind and virtue*. The protection of our souls will be entrusted to them. From wherever, from whatever principle of these doctrines we look at this, we are inevitably led to despotism. This is an inevitable result for whoever intends to believe in an absolute truth and in an absolute right which imposes duties.)

Another adept, Alberto Mario, noticing in a letter of 1863 Mazzini's ideological changes and inconsistencies through time, bitterly criticised these shifts referring precisely to some of Mazzini's recurrent formulas:

Mi trovai sempre in disaccordo con Pippo. Il quale del resto non è punto in accordo con sé medesimo in quanto concerne le idee professate. Tu sai che prima era eclettico [sic], poi spiritualista...; ora è panteista... Prima si

³⁵ 'Tutto quello che potrà diffondere, anche disordinatamente, i nostri principii, e non foss'altro, le nostre formule, le nostre parole—gioverà per quel tempo... Queste cose bisognerebbe batterle, ribatterle, come i San Simonisti facevano delle loro formule—e invader la stampa' (Whatever may spread, even in a disorderly way, our principles, our formulas, our words, will be beneficial at that time... We should repeat this again and again, as the Saint-Simonians did with their formulas—and we should flood this in the press): Mazzini to Luigi Amedeo Melegari, Geneva, 1 October 1833, *SEL*, vol. 9, pp. 95–6 (emphasis added).

³⁶ Giuseppe Mazzini, 'Foi et avenir' (1835), *SEL*, vol. 6, pp. 278–9, note.

³⁷ See Alessandro Levi, *La filosofia politica di Giuseppe Mazzini* (1922), ed. Salvo Mastellone (Naples, Morano, 1967), pp. 125–54, especially pp. 127 and 135.

³⁸ See Paul Bénichou, *Les temps des prophètes: doctrines de l'âge romantique* (Paris, Gallimard, 1977); Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution and Romanticism: The Genesis of German Modern Political Thought, 1790–1800* (Cambridge, MA, and London, Harvard University Press, 1992); Georges Gusdorf, *Le romantisme*, Vol. 1: *Le savoir romantique* (Paris, Payot & Rivages, 1998); Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1999).

³⁹ On the nature of 'Mazzinian idealism', see the remarks by Nicola Badaloni, *La cultura. Part III: Natura artificiale e intelligenza sociale nell'età del romanticismo*, in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 3. Dal primo settecento all'unità* (Turin, Einaudi, 1973), pp. 964–5. As a later and strongly politicised offshoot of the idealistic tradition—turned into neo-idealistic—one may consider the influential interpretation of Mazzini's formula by Giovanni Gentile (on this specific aspect, see my 'Pensiero e azione': Giovanni Gentile e il fascismo tra Mazzini, Vico (e Sorel)', *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, 35 (2001), 193–217).

⁴⁰ See Carlo Pisacane, *Saggi storici-politici-militari sull'Italia*, written between 1851 and 1855, and posthumously published between 1858 and 1860, cited in Franco della Peruta, 'Introduzione', in Carlo Pisacane, *La rivoluzione* (Turin, Einaudi, 1976), p. xlv (emphasis in the original).

dichiarava continuatore degli uomini del '93 (vedi *Giov. It.* 1833); trovava egregia la formula *Libertà—Fratellanza—Uguaglianza*; moveva quindi dal dato di *diritti dell'uomo*, ora dice che quella formula è atea, che bisogna sostituirvi *Dio e Popolo* che si tolse al Frate Savonarola, e bisogna stabilire il *dovere* come fonte del *diritto*.⁴¹

(I always disagreed with Pippo [Mazzini's nickname]. After all, he himself is in disagreement with his own ideas. You know that he was first an eclectic, then a spiritualist . . .; now he is a pantheist . . . Once he declared himself to be a continuator of the men of '93 (see the journal *Giovine Italia* from the year 1833). He thoroughly supported the formula: *Freedom—Brotherhood—Equality*. He thus based himself on the *rights of men*, now he says that this is an atheist formula, and that it should be substituted with *God and the People* (which he took from the friar Savonarola), and that *duty* should be considered as the source of *right* [*diritto* actually means both right and the law].)

In a chapter of his *Note autobiografiche*, Mazzini drew a parallel between 'Religion' and 'Art', which 'grasp the idea lying in the heart, confide it to affections, convert it into passion and transform the contemplative man into an apostle'. Art and religion, the Italian patriot wrote, 'translate through symbols and images' the 'thought of a given Time'.⁴² Mazzini thus emphasised the relation established—also through symbols and through irrational feelings producing action—between poetry and prophecy. This was a general relation found in European Romantic and nationalist thought, in which—as Mary Anne Perkins has shown—'religious experience, aesthetic theory and the search for a unifying philosophical principle were combined'.⁴³ The theory of the 'Genius' which one finds in Mazzini's youthful essay on Goethe's *Faust*, as well as in his conception of Byron and Foscolo (his ideal models),⁴⁴ provided, furthermore, Mazzini with examples of artists, and especially

⁴¹ See Alberto Mario to Francesco Campanella, 5 May 1863, cited in Fulvio Coni, 'Alberto Mario e la crisi della sinistra italiana dopo Aspromonte: fra rivoluzione nazionale e rivoluzione democratica', in *Alberto Mario e la cultura democratica italiana dell'Ottocento*, Atti della Giornata di Studi (Forlì, 13 May 1983), ed. Roberto Balzani and Fulvio Coni (Bologna, Boni, 1986), pp. 87–8. Mario did not fail to notice the ideological matrices of Mazzini's thought: 'Le sue teorie d'oggi sono indeterminate e desunte dal Globo che si pubblicava a Parigi prima del 1830 e da G. Reynaud; vale a dire sono frammenti del Samsimonismo' (His current theories are imprecise and taken from the journal *Globe*, published in Paris before 1830, and from G. [sic, actually J.] Reynaud. That means they are fragments of the Saint-Simonian doctrine).

⁴² See Giuseppe Mazzini, *Note autobiografiche*, ed. Roberto Pettici (Milan, Rizzoli, 1986), p. 137.

⁴³ See Perkins, *Nation and World*, p. 131. I partly draw here from the references and conclusions of my 'Fate della religione una rivoluzione'.

⁴⁴ On Mazzini's 'Genius', see Anna T. Ossani, *Letteratura e politica in Giuseppe Mazzini* (Urbino, Argalia, 1973), pp. 7–57. On his literary and aesthetic theories in general and their intellectual context, G. Pirrodda, *Mazzini e Tencar: per una storia della critica romantica* (Padua, Liviana, 1968).

poets, who were also militant *lietanti*—and who showed the traits, at times, of religious prophets. I think here in particular of Foscolo, as the preacher of a kind of civil religion for the Italian nation in his *Sepolcri*.⁴⁵

Democracy between Republic, Education, and Covenant

One of Mazzini's most hailed symbols was the republic: a political ideal which he served throughout his life with religious commitment. Since the *Istruzioni generali* of 1831 (the founding charter of Giovine Italia), the republican option was embraced and defended by Mazzini and his followers as a glorious Italian and European tradition. It also figured prominently in the famous oath of the movement: 'Giuro . . . di consecrarmi tutto e per sempre a costituire con essi (affiliati alla Giovine Italia) l'Italia in Nazione Una, Indipendente, Libera, Repubblicana' (I swear I will consecrate myself entirely and forever, together with the followers of Giovine Italia, to make Italy One, Independent, Free, and Republican).⁴⁶ The most advanced practical realisation of this republican ideal during the Risorgimento was probably the Roman Republic of 1849. It is known, however, that Mazzini was not among the authors of the Roman republican constitution, since he reached Italy's future capital about a month after its charter had been drafted.⁴⁷ At that time Mazzini was not even entirely in favour of a republican constitutional assembly, since he thought the Republic should be founded on a decision made by a finally unified Italy and not by a handful of revolutionary patriots. The delaying of this clear constitutional option was accompanied by the fact that Mazzini always referred to the 'republic'—again—more as a symbol and catchword, than as a historical reality, past or future. This mainly symbolic use was typical after all, as we said, of his political style. The consequent absence on Mazzini's part of any clear-cut theoretical statement regarding a

⁴⁵ I consider Foscolo's civil religion, suggested mostly on poetic grounds in his *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* and his *Sepolcri*, and centred mainly on Ancient Greek and Roman rituals and traditions, as perhaps the major (if never achieved) attempt to create a democratic civil religion in modern Italy. (The distinction between 'civil', i.e. democratic, and 'political', i.e. monistic and authoritarian, religions is suggested by Gentile, *Le religioni della politica*, pp. xiii–xiv).

⁴⁶ See 'Istruzione generale per gli affiliati nella Giovine Italia' (1831), *SEI*, vol. 2, pp. 45–56 (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁷ See Ivanoe Bonomi, *Mazzini trionfatore della repubblica romana* (Turin, Einaudi, 1936), pp. 84–5. See also, especially concerning the limitations of Mazzini's republicanism, Giorgio Falco, *Mazzini e la costituente* (Florence, Sansoni, 1946), pp. 69–71, 76–7. One should obviously not overlook the historical contingency in which this short work by Falco (which also documents a new democratic revival of Mazzini) originated: that of the founding of the Italian republic after the war.

republican constitution and the means of its practical realisation contributed to weakening his often-stated faith in the republic. For strategic reasons, the Genoese patriot had to, at times, give up his republican ideal when the higher need of political unity was at stake. It is well known that Mazzini was criticised because of these contradictions in his republican faith by one of his foremost followers, who would in reality later give up entirely the republic, in the name of Italian unity. This follower and critic was Francesco Crispi, who wrote in an open letter to Mazzini, actually as a defence of his own political changes: 'Voi siete repubblicano... Ma voi al 1860, come al 1831, come al 1848, come al 1849, come sempre, chiedevate che all'unità, a questo grande idolo d'una nazione compatta, si sacrificasse la forma' ('You are a republican... But in 1860, as in 1831, 1848, 1849, as always, you demanded that form should be sacrificed to unity, to that great idol of a unified nation').⁴⁸ Crispi was referring to the few instances in which Mazzini had apparently admitted the possibility of giving up the republican option, beginning with his infamous letter to Carlo Alberto of 1831.⁴⁹ However, perhaps especially in Mazzini's solitary and bitter last years, the republic was and remained—more than a 'semplice questione di forma' (plan question of form)—a 'principio d'Educazione' (principle of Education): it represented, mostly, a 'vincolo di religione sociale tra quanti professano fede in esso' (the bond of a social religion, for those who believe in it).⁵⁰ And this was also one of the chief functions of Mazzini's political religion and its symbols: their bonding force in the making of the new Italy. Perhaps this was what Mazzini was chiefly after in the end: a 'principle of Education' and a 'social and religious bond'—principles, ideals, symbols, and the 'education' they generated.

The political and social ties on which these principles would be founded were, according to Mazzini, duties: a 'religion of the duties'⁵¹ towards the family, the fatherland, and humanity. This had been true at least since Mazzini's *Foi et avenir* of 1835, and certainly in his writings of the 1840s, which were to form, two decades later, his celebrated *Doveri dell'uomo*.⁵²

⁴⁸ See *Repubblica e monarchia: A Giuseppe Mazzini. Lettera di Francesco Crispi, Deputato* (Turin, Tipografia V. Vercellino, 1865), pp. 10 and 27. See, for the context, Christopher Dugan, *Francesco Crispi 1818–1901: From Nation to Nationalism* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 243–71.

⁴⁹ See A. Carlo Alberto di Savoia, un italiano' (1831), in *SEI*, vol. 2, pp. 17–41.

⁵⁰ Cited by Levi, *La filosofia politica*, pp. 152–3 (I have emphasised 'principio' at the beginning of the quote, taken from minor writings by Mazzini of 1869–70).

⁵¹ I borrow this formula from Pietro Costa, *Civitas: storia della cittadinanza in Europa*, Vol. 2: *L'età delle rivoluzioni* (Rome and Bari, Laterza, 2000), pp. 532–41.

⁵² On the complex genesis of Mazzini's perhaps most systematic work, see Vittorio Parmentola, 'Doveri dell'uomo: la dottrina, la struttura', in *Mazzini e i repubblicani italiani: studi in onore di Terenzio Grandi nel suo 92° compleanno* (Turin, n.p., 1976), pp. 355–420. On the

Despite some similarities of this work with Silvio Pellico's *Doveri degli uomini* (1834) and with Tommaseo's exposition of a theory of duties in *Dell'Italia* (1835),⁵³ the real model of the Mazzinian *Doveri*—though very seldom recalled by scholars—is to be identified, once again, in a text by Lamennais, which Mazzini refers to repeatedly in the *Doveri*.⁵⁴ This was the *Levi du peuple*, whose author—the Breton *Abbé*—Mazzini called in his correspondence with his mother 'il Santo', while he transcribed for her very long excerpts from the booklet. In his *Levi*, Lamennais had exposed a doctrine of the duties as necessary for the founding of society, if one aimed at 'unity': those same duties towards family and country which feature so prominently in Mazzini's *Doveri*.⁵⁵

When it appeared in book form in 1860, this work exposed very clearly Mazzini's pedagogical conception of democracy.⁵⁶ In those pages Mazzini wrote:

international spread and fortune through time of the *Doveri*, see Terenzio Grandi, *Appunti di bibliografia mazziniana: la fortuna dei 'Doveri', Mazzini fuori d'Italia, la letteratura mazziniana oggi* (Turin, Associazione Mazziniana Italiana, 1961).

⁵³ See, respectively, *Dei doveri degli uomini: discorso ad un giovane di Silvio Pellico da Saluzzo* (Venice, Tipografia di Paolo Lampato, 1834), and [Niccolò Tommaseo], *Opuscoli inediti di Friu Girolamo Savonarola* (Paris, Delaforet, 1835) (later known, with the name of its author, as *Dell'Italia*). In some of his letters, Mazzini refers despidingly to the views of Pellico and Tommaseo as characterised by *quétisme* and *soumission* and as belonging to the politically resigned 'Christianisme à la Manzoni' (Christian faith in the style of Manzoni); see, for the first remark, Mazzini to Anne Courvoisier, Berne (July 1836), in *SEI, Appendice*, vol. 2, pp. 45–7; and, for the latter, Mazzini to Giinditta Sidoli, Bienne (2 April 1834), in *SEI*, vol. 9, p. 277. Possible relationships of Mazzini's work with that of Pellico have been suggested by Levi, *La filosofia politica*, p. 103; and by Parmentola, 'Doveri dell'uomo', pp. 361–2.

⁵⁴ I was thus misleading when I spoke elsewhere of the *Levi* as an 'inconfessato modello' (see 'Dio e il popolo', p. 419), since while not explicitly indicating Lamennais as a model for his own work and reflections, Mazzini does refer to this work among his sources.

⁵⁵ See Felicité Lamennais, *Le livre du peuple* (Paris, Delloye & Lecou, 1838), chs 9 and 14. This clear model of the *Doveri* has been emphasised very rarely in the historiography on Mazzini. See the incidental reference by Levi, *La filosofia politica*, p. 103 (who refers on this to [Ernesto Nathan], 'Cenni e proemio al testo' in *Scritti editi ed inediti di Giuseppe Mazzini*, Daeliana edn, vol. 18, p. lx). The reason for this negligence is in my view due to the scarce philological interests of most scholars of Mazzini, and it is probably also caused by resistances to tracing Mazzini's ideas—especially in the case of his best-known and influential work—back to foreign sources and models. Beyond Mazzini's reference to Lamennais in the *Doveri*, one should also consider Mazzini's frequent mentions of Lamennais and his *Levi du peuple* in his correspondence of 1838–9 (i.e. in the years immediately preceding the composition of the articles in the journal *Apostolato popolare*, which will make up a great part of the *Doveri*). In these letters Mazzini openly expresses his intention to draft a work on, or inspired by, Lamennais (see *SEI*, vols 14–15).

⁵⁶ On which one may recall important suggestions by Giulio Bollati, *L'Italiano: il carattere nazionale come storia e come invenzione* (1972) (Turin, Einaudi, 1983), pp. 61–2, 108–10. Especially for the long-lasting influence of Mazzini's pedagogical and populist conceptions, see, furthermore, Alberto Asor Rosa, *Scrittori e popolo: il populismo nella letteratura italiana contemporanea* (1965) (Turin, Einaudi, 1988), pp. 35–6.

EDUCAZIONE, abbiamo detto; ed è la gran parola che racchiude tutta quanta la nostra dottrina. La questione vitale che s'agita nel nostro secolo è questione d'Educazione . . . Si tratta dunque di trovare un principio educatore . . . che guidi gli uomini al meglio, che insegni loro la costanza nel sacrificio . . . E questo principio è il DOVERE. Bisogna convincere gli uomini che essi, figli tutti d'un solo Dio, hanno ad essere qui in terra esecutori d'una sola Legge.⁵⁷

(EDUCATION, we said. That is the great word that encapsulates all our doctrine. The vital question which agitates our century is the question of Education . . . We thus must find an educational principle . . . that will guide men toward the best, that will teach them constance in sacrifice . . . This principle is DUTY. We should convince men that, as sons of one God, they must be the executors on earth of one single Law.)

Ever since his well known articles *Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe* of 1846, Mazzini had, after all, affirmed: 'Democracy is above all an educational problem.' And it was from the 'educational problem' that, in Mazzini's conception, 'the whole future of democracy' descended, as he explained:

Il problema che vogliamo risolvere è un problema educativo; è l'eterno problema della natura umana . . . Noi democratici vogliamo che l'uomo sia migliore di quanto egli è . . . Quando gli uomini avranno più stretti rapporti attraverso le loro famiglie, le loro proprietà, l'esercizio di una funzione politica nello Stato, nonché attraverso l'educazione, allora famiglia, proprietà, nazione, umanità diventeranno più onorate di quanto lo siano ora.⁵⁸

(The problem whose solution we seek is an educational problem. It is the eternal problem of human nature . . . We wish man to be better than he is . . . When all men shall commune together with their families, by property, by the exercise of a political function in the State, by education—family, property, country, humanity will become more holy than they are now.)⁵⁹

'Education' had therefore been, and remained, one of the founding principles of Mazzini's gospel. In the introduction to the *Doveri* he had written: 'EDUCAZIONE . . . è la gran parola che racchiude tutta quanta la nostra dottrina' (EDUCATION . . . is the great word that encapsulates all our doctrine). The same structure of the popular booklet (which was divided

⁵⁷ See 'Doveri dell'uomo' (1860), *SEI*, vol. 69, p. 16.

⁵⁸ See *Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe* (1846–1847), *SEI*, vol. 34, p. 112, partly in the original English (see note 59) in Salvo Mastellone, *Mazzini pensatore politico in inglese: 'Democracy in Europe' (1840–1855)* (Florence, Olshchki, 2004), p. 163. See also idem, *La democrazia etica di Mazzini (1837–1847)* (Rome, Archivio Guido Izzi, Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano, 2000), especially pp. 99–110, 173–80. Perhaps surprisingly the term 'democrazia' never appears in the text of the *Doveri* (I have checked some concordances of this work in my essay 'Dio e il popolo', p. 421).

⁵⁹ See *SEI*, vol. 34, pp. 107 and 109.

into ten short chapters or statements, if we do not count the introduction and the conclusion) was conceived as that of a decalogue: some kind of ten commandments.

The biblical reference is again quite appropriate here: a reference to the thought and action of a political leader who was, at the same time, the founder of a new religion and of a chosen nation. De Sanctis's formula with which we began—Mazzini as the 'Moses' of Italian unity—comes to mind again, since it was not simply the fruit of the historian's imagination.⁶⁰ Already in his 1832 article 'Di alcune cause che impedirono lo sviluppo della libertà', it was Mazzini himself who—still at the beginning of the political and religious journey that would be coronated in the Promised Land of Italian unification—wrote with foresight, or better proclaimed as an oath: 'Ci corre debito inviolabile, emancipando una razza, condurla almeno, come Mosé, in faccia alla terra promessa—quand'anche, come Mosé, noi dovessimo salutarla da lungi e morire' (It is our inviolable duty, as we emancipate a race, to lead it, as did Moses, to the edges of the holy land. Even if, as Moses did, we might have to salute it from afar and die).⁶¹ And, as in the biblical story, that oath was to be fulfilled by the 'Moses' of Italian unity.

But the existence of a 'covenant' between God and the 'chosen people' (God and Italy, according to Mazzini), modelled on the biblical one, also meant a reaffirmation of God's authority over the nation, the people.⁶² A fact which was proven by Moses's and, in a sense, Mazzini's end, as well as by

⁶⁰ On the presence and role of the image of Moses in the Italian Risorgimento (though with particular reference to Gioberti), especially through the influence of French thought, mostly Saint-Simonian, see Sofia, 'Le fonti bibliche del primato italiano'. Recalling the Rousseauian origins of the ideal of Moses as legislator, Sofia relies on David A. Wisner, *The Cult of Legislator in France, 1750–1830: A Study in the Political Theology of the French Enlightenment* (Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 1997).

⁶¹ See Mazzini, 'Di alcune cause che impedirono finora lo sviluppo', p. 186.

⁶² On the 'Mosaic Covenant' in nationalisms and some of its implications, see Smith, *Chosen People*, pp. 54–8 (which, however, ignores Mazzini, an excellent case for his thesis). On this, Smith follows David Novak, *The Election of Israel: The Idea of a Chosen People* (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1995). Novak, examining the 'biblical presentation of the doctrine of the election of Israel', notices that: 'It is God who initiates the relationship with Israel, and it is Israel who is to respond to that initiation . . . Any attempt to see this relationship as some sort of contract, some sort of bilateral pact between two autonomous parties, is clearly at odds with the biblical teaching. In the Bible, God alone is autonomous, and God alone can make initiatory choices with impunity. Israel's only choice seems to be to confirm what God has already done to her and for her', ibid., p. 163 (partly quoted by Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, p. 57). On the 'radical voluntarism', and the implications and consequences of the biblical covenant, see, however, the well known and quite opposite reading proposed by Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York, Basic Books, 1985), especially ch. 3, 'The Covenant: A Free People', pp. 73–98.

the only partial fulfilment of Mazzini's political project (whose fate obviously showed not to be, in the end, entirely in his hands). If Mazzini was Moses and Italy the Israelites, God would prevail or at least continue to impose himself: and the inherent and unresolved tension in Mazzini's vision between authority and freedom ('Dio e il popolo') would remain alive, with unforeseen consequences, in the Promised Land of a unified Italy.